

9

A LETTER OF THANKS
FROM THE
LONDON CORRESPONDING SOCIETY,
TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
THOMAS SKINNER,
LORD MAYOR OF LONDON.

*For his Lordship's upright conduct in dispensing with Military
Attendance on a late Occasion.*

LONDON, Nov. 28, 1794.

My Lord,

ACCEPT our Thanks for your laudable conduct in opposing the attendance of a *Military Force*, during the present Trials for High Treason: Such conduct, we trust, *arises from* an aversion to that system of Terror, which, though of late years but too prevalent, is utterly repugnant to the true principles of the British Constitution.

This Address is not sent to you, my Lord, for the purpose of exhibiting any ill-will or disrespect for the *Regulars*, or from any resentment against the misconduct of some Members of the Volunteer Corps:—On the contrary, we are sensible the service which you have suppressed was not more odious to the good Citizen than to the good Soldier. Our only wish is to express the pleasure which we feel in anticipating the effects which your conduct has a tendency to produce.

The conduct of Magistrates operates not only on the Individuals who happen to become the immediate objects of their authority:—The influence of that conduct extends through the whole Community.

When authority is vested in weak zealots, or the servile dependents of a Minister, partial administration soon subverts

verts all confidence in the Laws, and when the Injured are awed into silence, even slight grievances are productive of the most rancorous resentment; which naturally stimulates illegal exertions, in proportion as the sufferers have lost the hope of legal Redress.

Widely different is the state of Society where the good Magistrate, with parental care, endeavours to allay animosity, to compose differences, and diffuse that amity and mutual confidence which form the strongest social bond:—If the misconduct of others should provoke popular indignation, he will provide in the most cautious and inoffensive mode against the possible event of public tumults, rather than excite them by impertinently excluding Citizens from the public streets by *Martinetts* armed with fixed bayonets.

Such, my Lord, are the marks of an officious hireling: and such the Characteristics of a wise and upright Administrator of the Laws.

We flatter ourselves the fair form of Justice will again be seen in the Civic Chair; and amidst other objects of felicitation, on which we do not think it would be proper to publish our sentiments, pending the present Trials, we cannot but congratulate the Inhabitants of this great City on so agreeable a prospect:—For ourselves in particular, we trust that our determined perseverance in the pursuit of equal Representation, will be free from those lawless interruptions which we have formerly experienced; and that, while our conduct is legal, an upright Magistrate will not withhold from us the PROTECTION of the LAWS.

Signed in Name, and by Order of the LONDON
CORRESPONDING SOCIETY,

ANTHONY BECK, President.

The Right Honourable the LORD MAYOR,
London.

(10)

A SEASONABLE CAUTION
FROM THE
LONDON CORRESPONDING SOCIETY;
TO THEIR
FELLOW CITIZENS, AND THE PUBLIC IN GENERAL.

COUNTRYMEN !

LONDON, 28 Nov. 1794.

WHILE the Tools of corrupt Power are using every endeavour to blacken the character of this Society, by imputing to it violent Intentions, which it never entertained; We are equally sensible there are many who think our conduct blameable in the contrary extreme; imputing our zealous care to preserve the public Peace to a pusillanimous neglect of our persecuted Associates.

The former, we have long been convinced, were, in general, sensible, that the opinions which they propagated, of us, were false and calumnious; and the late Trials have impressed the same Opinion on the Public Mind: Their perseverance, in the same conduct, can therefore only excite our contempt. But the latter, as we think them actuated by an injudicious zeal, appear not unworthy that friendly Caution which is the purpose of this Address: and which we are the rather induced to offer, from a persuasion that however they may have been induced to avoid or desert this Society, under a belief that its conduct was too cold and languid, they yet feel such an affectionate interest in the welfare of its members, as joined with the generous warmth of their own dispositions, may subject them to become the victims of those Snares, which we have reason to suspect are, on the present occasion, laid for them.

A similar attention is due, from us, to those persons, who having long laboured under prejudices against this Society, in consequence of *Misrepresentation*, have been suddenly undeceived, and resent with the fellow-feeling and spirit of Britons, the cruel purpose which those prejudices were intended to accomplish. We cannot better obviate any ill consequences which these causes tend to produce, than by thus publicly stating the sinister practices which prevailed during the Trial of Mr. HARDY: the manifest intention of which was to raise a tumult, in order to throw odium on the London Corresponding Society, as if they were the real agitators.

It is well known to the persons who frequented the neighbourhood during that Trial, that among the extraordinary number of what are called *Peace-Officers*, who were ordered to attend, there were a considerable part whose behaviour was so extremely insolent, that if its effects had not been counteracted by the prudence of the Populace, the place must have been filled with continual riot.

To the Members of the London Corresponding Society their Insults were particularly directed,—They frequently mustered before the House appointed to receive the Witnesses,—and without any provocation, accosted them with scurrilous and menacing language; and to complete the illegality of their behaviour, wilfully deprived them of Ingress and Egress.—But however irksome these Insults might be, they failed of producing any thing like a Riot.

At an advanced stage of the Trial, one of the attendants of the Court brought out a report that Mr. Hardy was acquitted; and

the expressions of joy which ensued, furnished a pretence to some other attendants, to assault and beat several persons who were near the Court.—Notwithstanding appearances, We are willing to hope, there was not any thing premeditated in this business; nor though we are satisfied the assaults committed by the Attendants of the Court, were unwarrantable by Law, have we any desire to stimulate a spirit of litigious revenge; we only wish the Members and Friends of the London Corresponding Society to be on their guard against every attempt to draw them from that rigid decorum, which in general characterizes their own Meetings; and which is in the highest degree due to a Court of Law.

Another Circumstance appears to us of such importance that we regret our want of leisure, at the present juncture, to lay the authenticated particulars before the public.—We mean the attempts which were made by some persons, pretending to be a deputation from our Committee, to prevail on sundry mechanics to leave their employments for the purpose of proceeding to acts of violence, in case Mr. Hardy had not been acquitted. The following instance must suffice for the present.

Two persons genteelly dress'd, offered a Purse, containing some Guineas to the Shopman of Mr. Cullen, Upholder, Windmill-Street, on condition that he would introduce them to the Journey-men of Mr. Cullen, and another Shop where he had formerly worked. We wish that in addition to his spurning their offer, he had contrived to secure them both;—A conduct which we earnestly recommend in case of any similar attempt.

It would give us great concern if our remarks on the misbehaviour of some of the persons, who appeared as peace-officers, were to be construed into an intention of encouraging enmity towards persons who are employed in that Service:—We respect as a valuable part of the Constitution, the Office of a Constable, and though we cannot say the same for the newly invented character of a Police-Officer, yet while they act conformably to Law, they ought not only to be protected from insult, but even entitled to assistance, if necessary. It were well, however, if these persons collectively would take care that individuals of their own body do not with impunity, break the peace.

We conclude with a few words of advice to the GENTLEMEN who compose the VOLUNTEER CORPS.

It is pretty generally known that toward the conclusion of Mr. HARDY's Trial several persons were committed to Prison for *laughing* at the mixture of bad discipline and impertinent behaviour which they, particularly the Cavalry, exhibited: We wish them to bear in mind that the professed purpose of their Association was to *defend*, not to *oppress*, their fellow citizens.—This will be ill performed unless they can attain to better Discipline: For whatever may be their intentions in general (and we have no wish to suppose they are not perfectly laudable) it will under their present circumstances, be constantly in the power of a few ill-taught Members to bring disgrace on the whole Corps.

Signed in Name, and by Order of the LONDON CORRESPONDING SOCIETY.

ANTHONY BECK, President,

